

October 1, 2014 | 460 views

**NEWS**

# Valley Stream Civilian Patrol seeks new members

Force has aged and shrunk since forming 24 years ago

By Brendan Murray [bmurray@liherald.com](mailto:bmurray@liherald.com)



COURTESY VALLEY STREAM CIVILIAN PATROL  
The insignia of the Valley Stream Civilian Patrol. The Patrol is actively seeking new members.



crash to police. "It was a very small collision, it didn't seem as there were any injuries and the two drivers were communicating safely, so there wasn't anything to report," he said. "Besides, for all I know those two may not want the police involved. They would rather handle their business themselves."

Jung joined the Civilian Patrol, which was founded in 1990, when he moved to Valley Stream a little over a decade ago. He wanted to get involved in his new community, he said.

Fred Jung drove carefully down Merrick Road in Valley Stream, cruising just below the speed limit. His eyes scanned the road, sidewalks, houses and parking lots he passed, his routine during the two hours he spends each Thursday night on duty for the Valley Stream Civilian Patrol.

Traffic became thicker, then stopped. "It's not unusual for me to hit traffic in this area, but this is just about as bad as I've ever seen it," he said.

Inching forward, he soon discovered the cause: Two men stood near two cars stopped in the right lane, examining damage from a rear-end collision.

Jung didn't reach for his radio or cell phone, deciding not to report the

He strives to be unobtrusive when on patrol, he said. He drives 10 mph on side streets so he can focus on the road and what's going on to the left and right. He is careful to avoid holding up traffic on major roadways like Rockaway Avenue and Merrick Road. He pulls to the side of quieter streets to allow traffic to pass.

While most nights go without incident, Jung occasionally reports things to police and to the Civilian Patrol's dispatcher, Dorothy Waltz. Procedure dictates that he attempt to stay within sight of an incident while he waits for police to arrive.

The patrol has guidelines of its own. "We are not a law enforcement organization," Jung was quick to point out. "We have no power to arrest, write tickets or anything like that. We also can't break the law ourselves when looking into something, so we cannot encroach on private property without the owner's permission, and we cannot break traffic laws while on patrol."

He continued, "We really never leave our cars. That's for our own safety as well as the safety of those in the area." Members do get out of their vehicles, he added, to help someone who may be injured.

Jung has never witnessed a crime in progress, and he is thankful for that, he said. He has alerted police to a number of incidents, including a visibly intoxicated man walking down a Valley Stream street and a van unloading items into a car in the Clear Stream Avenue School parking lot. The latter turned out to be a teacher whose vehicle had broken down.

Civilian Patrol members' jurisdiction includes all areas that use a Valley Stream address, including apartment complexes and senior living communities like the Meadows. It's a large area to cover, and Jung said the organization needs new members to keep the patrol going.

Several cars used to go out on patrol at the same time, usually with two members in each. Those days are long gone, Jung said: Members often travel alone, and there is often only one vehicle out at a time. "When I first started, there was never someone on patrol by themselves, but now it's often that I ride solo," he said.

The patrol was founded by Guy Ferrara, its former president, who eventually recruited current president Ralph Polverino. The organization grew quickly, counting more than 100 members at its peak over a decade ago. Many of the group's original and early members have since left, retiring due to age, time constraints or relocation. The roster now hovers at around 20 members. It operates entirely on volunteered time, with no real budget, though donations have been received sporadically in the past from some apartment complexes and neighborhoods whose residents appreciate the watchful eyes.

"We used to have plenty of members, but as time has passed, we've gotten smaller and smaller," Polverino said. "We can do a much better job if there are more of us."

The group is actively seeking new members, and Jung said he hopes to see some younger people join the mission. Members must be at least 19, must be Valley Stream residents and must be able to volunteer about two hours of time per week. A valid driver's license is also highly recommended.

"We have and want to have members from all walks of life, all ages, all education levels on the Civilian Patrol," said Jung.

"Given the economy, we understand that it can be very hard for new residents to find time," Polverino said. "They have a mortgage to pay, they work hard, they work long hours, and they have to take care of their kids. But if people can give us just two hours of their time, it can really help to make Valley Stream a safer place."

Jung said that joining the patrol provides a closer connection to one's neighbors. "Giving back to the community, even like this, really makes you feel closer to Valley Stream and gives you a sense of pride in your community," he said. "Knowing that you help in even a small way to keep it a great and safe place to live means a lot."

Member George Catalano, who also serves as the group's treasurer, said the role allows him to return some measure of service to a community he feels has served his family well. "The reason why I do this is simple," Catalano said. "It's our neighborhood, and we should take a lot of pride in that. It has given a lot to us. My kids grew up here, and it was always a safe community. Now it's my turn to make sure it's still safe for new families."

Anyone interested in joining the Civilian Patrol can find out more by attending its meetings on the last Thursday of each month in the Village Hall courtroom, or by logging onto its website, [www.ValleyStreamCivilianPatrol.org](http://www.ValleyStreamCivilianPatrol.org).

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